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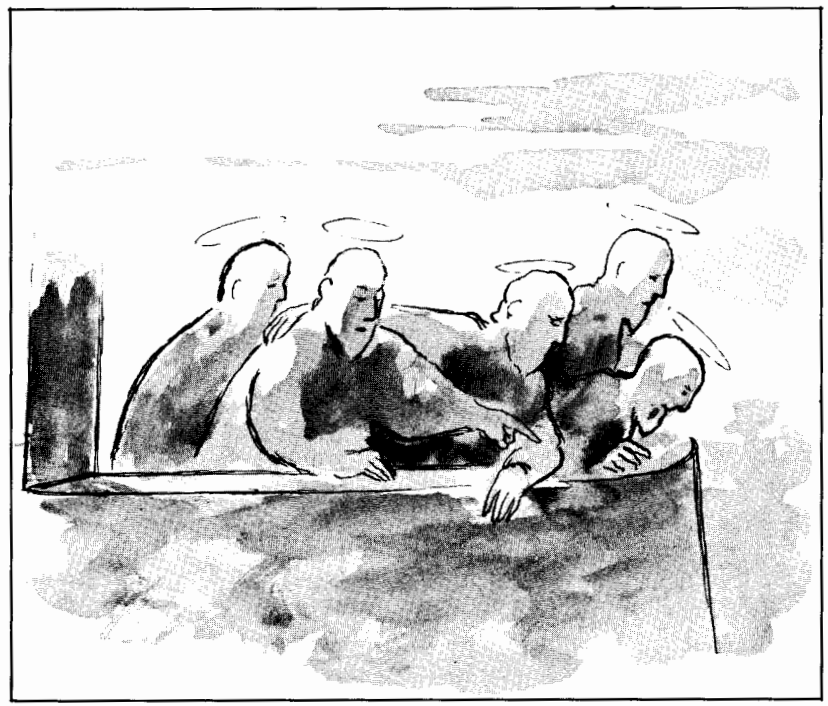

What Would Our Pioneers Think About Us?

Inquire, I pray you, of bygone ages,
and consider what the fathers have found;
for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing,
for our days on earth are a shadow.
Will they not teach you, and tell you,
and utter words out of their understanding?
Job 8:8-10

See *The Frolic of the Pioneers* by Louis Cochran, p. 9.

Volume 7, No. 1 **January, 1965**

THE "ONE FAITH" IN PAUL'S PLEA FOR UNITY

The apostle's plea for a sacred oneness of all the children of God in Ephesians 4:1-6 is based upon a sevenfold reference to unity, one of which is the "one faith." In this apostolic mandate for unity the "one faith" is linked with six other one's: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, and one God. Paul appears to arrange these one's into two triads, the first being *one body, one Spirit, one hope,* while the second is *one Lord, one faith, one baptism.* God is thus the seventh unit, making perfect both the source and the numerical reference to unity, the number *seven* so often symbolizing completion or perfection in the scriptures.

Joined as it is with *one Lord* and *one baptism,* the "one faith" suggests a relationship with the Lord that is based upon baptism. This is made clear in Gal. 3:26-27: "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Here we see that sonship is realized only through faith in Christ, a faith that expresses itself in baptism. Mark 16: 15-16 is a similar reference: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Faith is thus to *act.* As Gal. 5:6 puts it: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love." It is as if Paul were saying: *A man is right with God, not by any works that he does, such as circumcision, but by a faith that is activated by love.* Baptism is, therefore, in Paul's view *an act of faith,* or it is *the response of faith.*

Alexander Campbell said it this way: "Ordinances are instituted to consummate faith, or to perfect faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in what he obtained for us. Hence *acts of faith* were instituted and ordained—such as repentance, baptism, the Lord's day, the Lord's supper. There is a *special* grace connected in the Divine economy, with every specific ordinance. But whatever be the specific ordinance, faith is indispensable to the enjoyment of each and every blessing connected with it." (*Mill. Harb.,* 1857, p. 648)

Campbell insists that it is by *faith* that man is pardoned, but it is a faith that is exercised in acquiscence to the ordinances of the Lord. "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) This passage makes faith and works incompatible, but it does not make faith and grace incompatible: "by grace have you been saved *through* faith . . . " It does not therefore make

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grace and baptism into Christ incompatible. While baptism is an act of faith, it can hardly be viewed as a work, for in baptism the subject is as passive as he will be in his literal burial in the earth. Baptism is not a work, but an ordinance of God to which the faithful heart responds in loving obedience.

To quote Campbell again: "Baptism is but the personal and formal confession of the faith of the subject . . . It is a development of the grace of God."

It is a gross misinterpretation of scripture to make "the faith" mean everything in the New Testament. It is a common view among our people that if one is *faithful* he must be true to all that is written in the New Testament. The "faithful preacher" is therefore one who is loyal to all that the New Testament teaches.

If this is a proper understanding of the "one faith", then there was not a faithful man among all the twelve apostles except John, for he was the only one that lived to see all the New Testament written. Even Paul could not have been faithful since some of the "one faith" was composed after his death, and he himself had to say "we know in part". If one has to know and obey all the New Testament to be a faithful Christian and to be true to the "one faith", then we have to eliminate all the primitive saints as faithful, for they did not have all the scriptures we have.

There is no such difficulty when the "one faith" is equated with the gospel, which in turn must be distinguished from the apostles' doctrine. The gospel was fully preached before a book of the New Testament was composed, and this is the "one faith" Paul speaks of, and it is obedience to this that makes one a Christian.

Certainly doctrine is urgently important, and the disciple is disloyal if he fails to disobey any of it that he understands. But there are both babes and full grown men in the "one faith" who are equally faithful, even though they differ greatly, both in their understanding and practice of the apostles' doctrine.

The "one faith" is personal rather than doctrinal. Faith means a loving, trusting, believing relationship to God through Christ, and the scriptures never use faith to mean assent to or defense of doctrinal statements or loyalty to a church. When Jude urges disciples to "contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" he could hardly have had reference to all the New Testament, for some books were yet to be written. The faith to be defended against the heretics that Jude was writing about was the gospel that Peter preached on Pentecost.

Let me emphasize this proposition for your consideration: *whenever faith is made to mean assent to doctrinal statements or loyalty to a religion or church, it assumes the character of a meritorious act; but when faith is understood to refer to the personal relationship one enjoys with God through Christ, it assumes the character of grace.*

The view that faith is a matter of being doctrinally sound makes faith an act of man, while the position that faith is a personal relationship makes faith an act of God. One is justification by works, the other justification by grace.

The proposition I have affirmed may be illustrated by the use made of "faithful" and "unfaithful" by many modern religionists. A "faithful member" is one who adheres to the doctrines and practices of a particular religious persuasion. He is faithful if he believes what the church teaches and if he conforms to its practices. If he shows disloyalty in these respects, he is looked upon as *unfaithful.* A true disciple of the Christ who deeply loves and trusts the Saviour, believing in Him with a child-like faith, will be rejected as *unfaithful* by many churches today unless he subscribes to their particular doctrinal interpretations.

Faith is thus made to mean a conformity to orthodoxy rather than a cultivated relationship with a Person. This is why a man immersed in the secularism and sensualism of our age and impregnated with worldly ambitions can be "a faithful member of the church." It also explains why a devoted Christian may well be excommunicated when his faith in a Person transcends his loyalty to his party.

When faith is measured in terms of *things,* whether creedal statements or orthodox practices, salvation is seen as a matter of works, even though there might be lipservice given to the role of grace. Faith in *things* has one busy being right about everything. If he is right in his doctrinal interpretations, diligent in his giving, loyal in his attendance, dutiful to the "items of worship"—if indeed he wears the right name, belongs to the right church, and does everything according to the pattern, and if he stays that way —then he is faithful. Neither can one be sure at any given point as to whether he is saved, for it all depends on how *right* he is at the moment. If he is indeed faithful in all these things, then of course he will be saved. But why shouldn't he? He has been faithful, hasn't he?

This is salvation by works. The disciple who sees faith as *personal* has a different view. He never thinks of himself as "faithful" because of the works he performs for his Lord: "So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Lk. 17-10). He works because he is faithful; he is not faithful because he works.

In this regard it will prove helpful to notice our Lord's usage of *faithful* and *unfaithful.* You will find that he never speaks of one's faith or lack of it in terms of fidelity to a set of doctrines. It is always in terms of the person's relationship to God, or as to whether he trusts in the power of God. Listen to Him: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?" (Matt. 6:25-30).

Jesus says his disciples have *little* faith when they fail to trust God's providential care. Worry about where the next meal is coming from is unfaithfulness according to this scripture. We well know that a congregation can be full of worried, frustrated souls who, like sister Martha, are "anxious about many things," but who are not for one moment thought of as *unfaithful,* for they are loyal to all the external tests of orthodoxy. Have you ever heard of anyone being "withdrawn from" because of worry? Imagine a brother or sister being "churched" because of their anxiety about where the next meal was coming from!

But we can all recall cases of withdrawals because of doctrinal variations. Before me is a notice of one such withdrawal by a Dallas church from a man who at one time was one of their ministers. The charges against him include such things as his conviction that the Holy Spirit operates directly, erroneous views relative to the frequency of the Lord's Supper and the use of instruments of music in worship, and his questioning the undenominational character and unity of the Church of Christ.

This brother is, therefore, "unfaithful" (in the bull of excommunication he and his wife are referred to as "former brethren") because of erroneous views about things like instrumental music and the serving of the Lord's Supper. Regardless of how much love and trust there may be in his heart for the Christ, he is rejected as a brother because of unorthodox positions. If this is the meaning of the "one faith" in the apostle's call for unity, then unity will be realized only when we all see alike in regards to all these things that are subject to varying interpretations.

The scriptures have a much different view of what it means to be unfaithful. It may mean a rejection of the testimony of God: "Then Jesus said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing,'" (John 20:27). Thomas had ample testimony as to the reality of the resurrection. To refuse to accept the testimony was to be unfaithful. This is the meaning of "unfaithful" in Rev. 21:8 where the unbelievers along with the cowardly, murderers, and fornicators are said to have their place in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. These "unfaithful" that are doomed to the second death in hell are those who refuse to believe in the Christ, or who only give lipservice to Him, denying Him by the way they live.

It is a travesty against both reason and scripture to make a passage like this refer to those who happen to differ with us in doctrinal interpretation. To say a brother is "unfaithful" and put him in company with murderers and fornicators as does Rev. 21:8 because they play a piano at the congregation where he holds membership is to be ridiculous.

It is equally burlesque to take a passage like 2 Cor. 6:14, where it says: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," and make it mean that the young woman in your congregation cannot marry a man in another religious body, for this makes the man *unfaithful!* A man is faithful if he believes in Jesus as Lord, and if his

life bespeaks such a profession. It is true that Christianity is tragically divided into many sects, but it is fatal to assume that one must be in my own group in order to be faithful. The context of 2 Cor. 6:14 makes it clear what "unbeliever" means. He is the one who rejects the Christ and chooses paganism instead. It therefore makes sense to ask as Paul does in that passage: "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" There is a great deal in common between ourselves and the multitudes of others who profess the Christ, irrespective of the tragic fissions that divide us into many denominations.

We must learn, therefore, that in references to such verses as Rev. 2:10, which reads: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life," the reference is to fidelity to the Christ, and not to the list of doctrinal interpretations whereby we test a brother's loyalty. Mark it: *a brother may be doctrinally wrong and yet be faithful, and he may be doctrinally right and yet be unfaithful.* It is not a question of how good a biblicist he is or how orthodox he is, but whether he trusts in the Lord Jesus. He may be confused about many points of scripture, and yet be filled with trust and confidence that Jesus is Lord of his life. This is the "one faith" in Eph. 4:5, and it is this kind of faith that makes possible the sacred oneness for which the apostle pleads.

This is to say that there is no necessary connection between faith and knowledge. By this we mean that a disciple's faithfulness is not contingent upon how much he knows about the Bible, the church, the Christian system, or things in general. He may be an ignorant man and yet be faithful to the Christ, or he may be most sophisticated and yet be devoid of faith. It does not follow that the more one knows about the Bible the more faith he has. The man who has poured over the scriptures for a half century should have a richer faith because of it, but his faith may be weaker than that of a newly-born Christian. One might have great knowledge and little faith, or little knowledge and great faith. Faith is a simple and loving trust in Jesus the Christ; it is not academic devotion to a book or loyalty to a denomination.

Knowledge can be a dangerous thing, even knowledge about spiritual things. It tends to make a man arrogant, so that he looks down on the man who is not as far advanced as himself. It tends to make him unsympathetic with those he regards as ignorant. My experiences in the educational field have given me an insight as to how dangerous a consciousness of intellectual superiority can be. It is an evident danger in the church as much as in the world. The ignorance of wisdom can be fatal to a living faith.

One of my colleagues at the university has been on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He confides with me somewhat concerning his problems, and I have spoken to him of the peace that is in the Christ. He is a Ph. D., a Phi Beta Kappa who speaks several languages, and a man who is multidisciplined. But he does not know the Lord. As I spoke to him of the Christian faith, he said to me: "I wish I could believe that. I really do. I envy you. But my mind rejects it as fantastic." What he was really saying, bless his heart, was that he was simply too intelligent to believe what I believe!

We must not forget the apostolic warning that shows how knowledge can be a barrier to a loving faith: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know." (1 Cor. 8:1-2) He assures us that among those who are wise by worldly standards there are but few who are called (1 Cor. 1:26), and he tells us how he avoided lofty words of wisdom lest faith rest in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:5)

One of the amazing characteristics of Christianity is that the mystery of the gospel was hidden from the wise and revealed only to those with hearts like children: "In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.'" (Lk. 10:21)

This would suggest that faith is as simple as it is profound. What is the "one faith" of Paul's plea for unity? A simple trust in God through Christ.

There is no need for extended essays on the nature of faith, as if it were something quite beyond our grasp. One has faith in the Christ when he trusts in him enough to rely upon his promises and loves him enough to do what he commands. We can see this kind of faith in the experiences Jesus had with his followers. There is the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus and cried to Him, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon." At first Jesus did not even answer her, as if to see the measure of her faith. The disciples wanted to send her away. Finally Jesus spoke to her, explaining that his mission was to the Jews, and that it would hardly be fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. Then she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then said Jesus: "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matt. 15)

This touching story shows us what faith is—*great* faith! When one comes to Jesus and begs for help, and is satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the table, that is faith. She believed that Jesus was the answer to all her needs. The poor soul probably knew very little about Jewish theology, and maybe not much about anything else, but she believed that Jesus was the power of God.

Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, is another like her. When Jesus passed near him, he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those around him rebuked him, wanting him to be quiet. But he cried all the louder until Jesus heard him, and called him. The Master asked him what he wanted. "Lord, let me receive my sight." Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." (Mark 10)

And there is the woman who for twelve years had the flow of blood that the physicians could not cure, and who had spent all her money trying to get well. Despite the great throng she made her way to Jesus, saying, "If I touch even his garments,

I shall be made well." Her faith made her well. (Mark 5)

Faith may call for a response that makes no sense. It may even be preposterous, as in the commandment that Abraham should murder his own son. Can you not see Abraham as he prepared for his journey that fateful morning. Where are you going, Abraham? To slay my own son, my own dear Isaac. But why? The Lord told me to do so. How ridiculous! I would not commit a murder, especially my own son, not even if God told me to! But Abraham believed God, regardless of how unreasonable it might be. And is it not unreasonable to tell a man that he would give him a son, and that that son would be the means whereby he would become the father of many nations—and then turn around and tell him to murder the son!

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (Rom. 4:3) Paul explains that the purpose of all this was to make Abraham "the father of all who believe." It is the kind of faith that Abraham had that is the "one faith" in Eph. 4:5.

We should observe in conclusion, however, that the "one faith" in Paul's unity appeal is characteristic of a certain kind of person: one who leads a life worthy of the Christian calling. The apostle names four virtues in particular: "I urge you to behave with all humility, and gentleness, and patience. I urge you to bear with one another in love."

Here is our answer to the curse of party strife. When we are humble we set our own life beside the life of Christ and expose ourselves honestly to the demands of God. When we are gentle we have our passions under control and treat others with kindness. When we are longsuffering we bear with each other without irritation. When we have love in our hearts we have tender feelings even for the loveless and for those who would abuse us.

Humility, gentleness, longsuffering, love! This is the way to unity, the sacred oneness for which our Savior prayed. It is this kind of company that the "one faith" must keep.

"Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee." (Isa. 26:3)

—*The Editor*

Seminar on Fellowship at Wynnewood Christian Chapel, 2303 S. Tyler, Dallas, Texas, June 15-18. Brethren from all groups of Christian Churches—Churches of Christ will be invited, with representative leaders sharing in the seminar. The sessions will be open to all interested Christians. Further information will be published later. Correspond with L. M. Roberts, 4450 Preston Circle, Dallas, about the gathering.

THE FROLIC OF THE PIONEERS

By LOUIS COCHRAN

The place is Heaven; the time, the Present; the Characters, the Pioneers of the Restoration Movement; the Arch-Angel Gabriel, and the Arch-Angel Michael with the Flaming Sword, and the Devil.

The stars of Heaven cast a mellow radiance over Alexander Campbell as he folded his wings and glided to the designated rendezvous near the ramparts of the Celestial City. He hovered for a moment before settling close to the entrance to Gabriel's study, mindful lest he disturb the mighty Arch-Angel. With all his shortcomings, Alexander told himself, he had done his mortal best when on earth to point the way to Salvation. Many had scorned him, but he had also had his followers, and it was with a few of those who had labored with him the longest, and perhaps had loved him the most, that he had arranged for this reunion, a "Frolic", Raccoon John Smith would call it; a reassessment and evaluation of their work on earth, now a century passed. He bowed gravely to the Arch-Angel Michael with the Flaming Sword, gliding past him into Gabriel's sanctum, and resisted the impulse to peer over the gleaming white ramparts.

He recalled what the Arch-Angel Gabriel had told him when he had first petitioned for the reunion. "You are impatient, my son," he had said. "The smell of the earth is still about you. You are but an Apprentice in Heaven as yet. But the experience may be a lesson for you, and for the others, too; so I will consent for a few of your old comrades to review with you the results of your labors, even though only a paltry century has passed since you left the earth."

Alexander had the uneasy feeling that Gabriel had been half-provoked with him; a vision strong upon him of the Angel's flaming wrath when aroused by the face of evil. But the thought was dispelled as a sudden rustling arose behind him, a murmuring as of warm friends in the greeting of one another; restrained yet filled with deep emotion; quick, hearty handclasps and warm chuckles of great souls who loved deeply, and had labored long together in a mighty cause, and had prevailed.

Or had they?

The thought disturbed Alexander as he turned slowly to face them, permitting himself the luxury of that slow, twisted smile he usually had reserved in that other life for his family and for little children, his long Roman nose, as ever, standing a little to the right.

They were all there, those early leaders of that dedicated host who had first turned aside from their human creeds and had followed him into the Movement for the Restoration of the New Testament Church, confident that theirs was the will of God. And now they waited for him to speak, as they had waited on earth for him to begin his "monologues," as his enemies had styled his conferences with his associates; an opinionated autocrat, they had called him, who would brook no will but his own.

He winced at the recollection, acknowledging the truth of it, in part. But he had grown in grace as he had grown older among men, and wiser, he hoped; and before his summons had come he had even dared say that

Christians could be found in all parties; although it was said he was senile when he spoke thus, or, like Paul before Agrippa, he had become mad with much learning. He had been the unquestioned leader of strong men in the greatest Reformation since Martin Luther, and if he sometimes experienced a touch of earthly pride in his accomplishments, at least on earth he had never claimed to be a saint. But no indecisive weakling could have led that Movement, he told himself. Men like his own father, Thomas Campbell, and Barton Warren Stone, and Walter Scott, and Raccoon John Smith, and Jacob Creath and Phillip Fall, and John T. Johnson and William K. Pendleton, and other leaders of the Restoration Movement, who had stood shoulder to shoulder with him during those early days, had strong minds of their own which no man could sway unduly, each of them a priest before God in his own right.

He waved at Raccoon John Smith standing square-footed on the fringe of the little group, a man who feared no man nor the devil, only God. The brawny mountaineer seemed full-fleshed and muscular as when in the prime of manhood he had initiated the first successful, voluntary experiment in Christian Union ever consummated between two wholly separate and distinct communions, when the "Disciples" under his own leadership, and the "Christians" under Barton Stone, had united into one body at Lexington, Kentucky, on that first day in January, 1832.

Alexander turned to Barton Stone, who stood watching him with warm, steady eyes, waiting for him to speak. He felt a little guilty as their hands clasped. He should have welcomed Barton Stone's advances on earth with greater warmth; perhaps in his earthly state he had been a mite jealous of Stone's priorities in Christian unity; of his priority in time, priority in experience, priority in independence of the Movement, and priority in the repudiation of Calvinistic theology. Stone had achieved all this, and more, in his sacrificial devotion to the Cause, and his debt to him no man could tell.

Quickly, to hide his emotion, Alexander turned and embraced his father, Thomas Campbell, clasping his arms about his shoulders as he had done when his father had been old and bent and blind in the world of men. Now Thomas Campbell stood straight and slender, his mild brown eyes gleaming with fatherly pride in his tall son.

It was none else than Thomas Campbell, thought Alexander, who gave mankind its Declaration of Independence from spiritual bondage when he wrote his Declaration and Address in the mountains of western Pennsylvania:

> The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one . . .

The words echoed in his ears, stirring him as always with renewed purpose and inspiration:

> Full knowledge of all revealed truth is not necessary to entitle persons to membership . . . Neither should they for this purpose be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge.
>
> All who are thus qualified should love one another, as brothers, and be united as children of one family.
>
> Division among Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils.

No Declaration had been more right for the times than that one. But, after one hundred and fifty years, was it still right? They would soon see. God's ways are immutable and ever-lasting; His breath is the ocean breeze and His footsteps are the sea. There is no change in God. But for finite man, change is, indeed, his only constancy. Had their brethren on earth been wise enough to see when change was needed? Had they been courageous enough to accept it when they *did* see it?

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak," Father Thomas had pronounced as the infallible Rule of faith and practice; "where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

Under the influence of this Rule, thousands of men had broken their spiritual bondage, and, casting aside their human creeds, had rushed back to what they conceived to be the New Testament Church. Was the Rule *still* their guide? Or could it be, Heaven spare the thought, that they had attempted to *interpret* the silences as well as the commandments, and had thus created a babel of voices? Surely they still held to that cherished maxim: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty; in all things, love."

Or did they?

Alexander turned to greet Walter Scott. When he was at his best, no man on earth could evangelize with the power and eloquence of Walter Scott, his five-fingered program of salvation unanswerable in its logic. "Faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit," Scott had said. Thousands had been led to salvation by this formula, and millions more by this time had doubtless been converted by it.

They embraced, Alexander's halo a trifle awry now, and he turned to Robert Richardson. He owed much to Dr. Richardson: scientist, teacher, writer, scholar, preacher; for his selflessness, his devotion to Bethany College, his friend and physician, and his great biographer. He would not ask so much of him were they to live in human life again.

There was John T. Johnson, as straight and solemn as the Judge he had been on earth, a shining armour about him, who had forsaken a brilliant political career among men to be an Evangelist of the Lord; William K. Pendleton, who had twice been his son-in-law, and his successor as president of Bethany College and as editor of the Millennial Harbinger; still the affable cultured Virginia gentleman, standing now beside Raccoon John Smith, whose bold blue eyes were twinkling as though he were about to erupt into speech.

Raccoon John Smith had never been in awe of him, as some of the others had been, and to forestall a possible witticism which might seem too earthy, if Raccoon John had a mind to make it so, he turned quickly to greet Jacob Creath, the greatest natural orator of them all, and Phillip Fall, the schoolmaster and preacher who had taken whole congregations with him at Nashville, and at Louisville, when he broke the shackles of human creeds and began preaching the Gospel according to the unfettered teachings of Christ and His Apostles.

There were others on the edge of the little group: James A. Garfield, first known to him as a student, who had lived to become President of the United States; David S. Burnett, Moses E. Lard, John Rogers and Samuel Rogers, David Purviance, Alexander

Proctor, and in little whorls and eddies still others were arriving. He would want to greet them all. These were the stout souls of the early days who had borne the heat of battle; pillars of strength in a storm-wracked land, all of them, and scores more like them. And then Raccoon John Smith waved his arms as though unable any longer to restrain himself, his deep voice filling the heavens with its resonance.

"I say, Bishop," he called, "if it's in your mind that we visit the earth again, I want to go back to auld Kaintucky. There must be descendants of some of my Baptist brethren there I could capsize, and thus make our victory complete!"

Alexander Campbell frowned a little at the title, "Bishop," even as he chuckled. There was no irreverence in Raccoon John Smith, but there was no withholding his uninhibited spirit. He knew how Alexander disapproved of all titles for preachers which set them apart from their fellow men. Did he also suspect that he had taken a secret satisfaction in this one of "Bishop," fastened upon him by his neighbors, seeking to justify it on the grounds of Scriptural authority? He ignored the shaft. He loved men like Raccoon John Smith, ever searching for the Truth, and ever ready, whatever the consequences, to speak his mind for what he considered to be the truth.

"No," said Alexander. "This meeting is but a little frolic of the pioneers, as you might say, a reunion of old friends, that we might glimpse together the rewards of our labors upon the earth. The Arch-Angel Gabriel thought the experience would sweeten our souls, though whether with joy or with sorrow, we shall soon learn."

Raccoon John Smith shook his head. "There can be no sorrow in Heaven," he said. "It is a joy merely to be here. Why, I'm seeing some old friends here I frankly never expected would get here at all."

Alexander joined in the quiet laughter at the sally, his own face alight in anticipation and promise.

"It is but the twinkling of an eye, or less, in the Lord's time, since most of us left the earth. But in man's time it has been about a hundred years, a full century. Mighty works must have been accomplished; the victory of the cause we set in motion must be near completion."

"When I left in 1868," mused Raccoon John Smith, thoughtfully, "our 'peculiar plea,' as they called it, was doing well; it was sweeping everything before it. It must have taken the whole world by now!"

Barton Stone nodded, his face aglow. "Yes, the hundreds that came to be called 'Christian' at Cane Ridge must have increased by now to millions, and all members of one church, one body in Christ!"

Alexander smiled in agreement. "Much should have been accomplished," he said, "much can be expected. Come! Let us proceed to the ramparts and view for ourselves the fruits of our labors!!"

There was a happy, expectant rustle of wings as they gathered before the ramparts. For a moment there was silence as they gazed eagerly downward, their faces alight in anticipation. And then it was as though a thickness had settled among them, a wall of bewilderment and incomprehension;

a quick intaking of breath which left them numb. For a full moment they stood, speechless in astonishment.

Father Thomas was the first to break the silence, his gentle voice almost a prayer. "I cannot believe it!" he said. "What has happened? It looks worse than when we left there!"

Barton Stone turned to Alexander, almost dazed. "That Christian Unity of which we were so proud? Where is it? I see only sectarian pride and pomp and strife. And divisions! Even in our own brotherhood!"

"It's because we were guilty of sinful pride," said Raccoon John Smith hoarsely. He mopped his brow as though to wipe away a chill. "We thought we were Daniels come to judgment. Why," he peered closer, "I even see women preachers among our people!"

Alexander nodded, staring in almost disbelief. "They seem to be divided into three parts, like Caesar's Gaul," he said. "Look! There is one group calling itself 'Disciples'; another 'Christians' or 'Independents'; and still another, 'The Church of Christ'. And they're running in all directions, further dividing themselves. They're scoffing at one another, and hurling anathemas!"

Walter Scott interrupted him, his voice heavy with concern. "And they're divided on such non-essentials," he said. "I see organists and anti-organists; one-cuppers and many-cuppers; co-operatists and non-cooperatists; open communionists and closed communionists; open membership and closed membership groups. And look here!" He pointed downward. "There are scores of theological seminaries, despite your polemics against them, Mr. Campbell. They have forsaken the old slogans; the five-starred way of salvation has been forgotten!"

"And look at the organizations!" said Phillip S. Fall. "They seem obsessed with organizations! The chief concern of one group now seems to be 'restructuring' their organized life, whatever that means." He shook his head sadly. "I fear our brethren are leaving the task of converting the world to their organizations."

Barton Stone pushed closer to the ramparts, peering anxiously upon the earth. "I'm trying to determine just what they *do* believe now," he said. "I'm wondering if they themselves know."

"They are going straight to the devil!" said Raccoon John Smith. "The brethren we led out of denominationalism are running like rabbits back to their shelter. I move we petition the Arch-Angel for permission to drown the lot of them and start all over again!"

Robert Richardson turned his quiet eyes on Alexander. "What has become of our beloved Reformation, Mr. Campbell, our cherished movement to return to the simple teachings of the Gospel, our plea for Christian Unity? What has happened to our people?"

A rumbling voice came to them across the celestial intercommunication system, as though from a cavernous depth. "I can tell you what has happened to them! I, Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils, speak to you. Some of your brethren you see upon the earth are, indeed, among my choicest subjects, and I welcome them. It is I, the Devil, the King of Sin, and Lord of Hell, who has caused the strife among them. It is I who have created the divisions,

the confusions, the distrust, the worldly ambitions. It is I who have caused them to point the finger of suspicion and doubt at one another. I have sown dissension among them, and have throttled their desire to love one another." He laughed, a deep, penetrating rumble. "Your work is undone, 'Bishop' Campbell; you are a failure!"

Alexander stepped forward, his face stern. "Shut off that intercom!" he ordered. "We had enough of the Devil while on earth without being taunted by him in Heaven. Was that some of your mischief, Raccoon John? Did you throw that switch?"

"Yes, I did it," admitted Raccoon John Smith, as with a sharp click the connection was severed and the taunting voice abruptly ceased. "Let that be a lesson to all of us. We have only halfway obeyed the Gospel. The Saviour told us to watch as well as pray, and we neglected to watch over our brethren upon the earth. It's partly our fault that the Devil got in his unholy work. Now the only remedy, as I said, is to drown the lot of them as they did in Noah's time and begin again."

Instantly, cries of protest arose.

"No! They can be saved," cried one. "They can again be one body in Christ. But they must first abandon instruments of music in their worship. That has caused the trouble!"

"No, it is their organizations!" said another. "The trouble is caused by their church organizations and bureaucracies. All central organized church work is wrong!"

"No! No! The fault is plainly open-membership," another said. "It is a shameful, dreadful sin. No one should be accepted into membership with the saints until he is baptized by immersion!"

"Open-membership is no worse than open communion," cried another. "They both delight the Devil and open the sluice gates to damnation!"

The babel of voices rose higher and higher until the curious began to come out from the corridors of Heaven, and even the Arch-Angel Michael with the Flaming Sword emerged for a moment from his conference with Gabriel, and stared at them sternly. And then the uproar subsided as quickly as it had begun, and they looked at one another in sudden shame and soreness of heart.

John T. Johnson pushed close to Alexander and spoke solemnly as he would have done from the bench. "We could ask for an injunction against the Devil," he said. "We could petition the Arch-Angels for an injunction prohibiting His Satanic Majesty from ever again stalking the earth. His evil influence among men should be restrained."

Alexander looked at him in gentle reproof. "And thus deprive man of his free will, his right of choice?" he said. "No, that is not the way, our brethren must shame the Devil, and seek their salvation through their own free will, or be resigned to hell. Even though they destroy themselves, they have the right of choice. That is man's divinity!"

There was silence for a moment, and then Alexander Campbell continued, his voice rising. "We are saints now, they tell us, but even so, we are still so soon from our human weaknesses that we should be able to understand and to bear more patiently with those still on earth, as Moses and the prophets and all the other saints did for us in our time. And besides,"

his voice trailed off and for a moment the group thought he would not finish, "Besides," he resumed slowly, speaking now with visible effort, "perhaps we are not wholly guiltless. Perhaps we stressed too much on earth the *form* of salvation and Christian unity instead of stressing the basis of it, which is our faith in God. Perhaps we talked too much of a *return* to New Testament practices of the early church, and not enough of *advancing* in Christian grace." He paused, and then went on firmly. "I see the situation more clearly now. In spite of their confusion, our brethren are *not* lost. Rather, they have found themselves! They are beginning to move the church into the mainstream of current human life, where it was in the beginning and must ever be if it is to bear witness for the cause of Christ. They have come to realize that the essential facts of good and evil, the sublime truth of God, the saving power of Jesus—all these fundamental articles of faith we imparted to them, *must be translated in each age* by the church, in terms men of that age find vital. In effecting this translation to the needs of their age, our brethren seem to us confused, but that is only because they have become not quite so convinced that they are the only righteous ones; that they alone have all the truth."

"I agree," said Barton Stone, "and I can see, too, that their efforts in translating the eternal truths to the needs of their own are giving them a new humility, and that humility is spreading among all followers of Jesus, even to the denominations." He spoke softly, bending his head as though listening to earthly sounds, his face aglow. "They are all talking Christian unity now; for the first time in history they are beginning to realize that no man, nor any body of men, can possess all of God's truth. Not even ourselves."

Alexander joined him, peering closely upon earth, and listening. "Yet they are doing it without surrendering a single Gospel fact," he said. "They are beginning to realize there may be ten thousand opinions, but, by speaking in terms of the Scriptures, no offense is given to any brother, no pride of doctrine engendered, nor divisions created. By thus speaking the same things, mankind may come in time to think the same things, and in the end be of one mind and body of Christ. Thus once I taught on earth and thus I do believe now."

He paused, a sense of remembering in him, and then went on. "I was once so certain that I had the truth, the only truth and all the truth, that, like the Indian's tree I leaned the other way. I was once so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray nor sing with anyone not as perfect as I supposed myself to be. And then I discovered that on the principle of my conduct, there would never be a congregation or church upon earth. I tell you," his voice rose to a new sterness, "this plan of making our own nest, and fluttering over our own brood, of building our own tent and so confining all goodness and grace to our noble selves and the elect few like us, is the quintessence of sublimated Pharasaism. On earth, as in Heaven, we can have none of it! God is love, and love is the law of life! Our brethren must realize that sublime fact before they can save our movement for Christian unity, or themselves. Whatever their

differences in forms and procedures, their status as a Christian body, or their opinions on matters of faith and order, they must be governed by love, and give their hearts to Him who loveth most!"

He turned from the ramparts and spoke directly to the group, a look of serenity and growing confidence on his face. "That, gentlemen, will be the salvation of our brethren upon the earth. They must decide; they must make the choice. They must realize that a Brotherhood that does not remember what it was yesterday, that does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do, is a futile thing. But I would not if I could take from any one of them that spark of divinity, that mark of the God-head, which gives him the power and the choice to save or destroy himself."

There was a silence over the face of Heaven, and as they waited the Arch-Angel Gabriel and the Arch-Angel Michael silently joined them, a sign that their time together was coming to a close, Michael's Flaming Sword held downward, his hands folded about the hilt of it, a shining expectancy in their faces.

Alexander Campbell glanced at them, and his voice rose as if in triumphant vision. "In their quest for salvation and Christian unity, our brethren will learn that it is the image of Christ the world looks for and demands in His disciples," he said. "And this does not consist in being exact in a few things, but in one's general devotion to the whole truth so far as he knows it. We cannot make any one duty the standard of the Christian state, not even immersion. Everyone who believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, and repents of his sins, and obeys Him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of His will, is a Christian and a son of God!"

A rustle of wings; a faint exhalation of breath as those about nodded in agreement; a growing exultation in their hearts. And there was a silence, an emptiness, and the Arch-Angel Gabriel and the Arch-Angel Michael stood alone, smiling at each other. — 624 23rd St., Santa Monica, Calif.

An address delivered at the 8th Annual Dinner of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, October 5, 1964.

The Wisdom of Einstein

People will only read what they already believe.

The Europeans have something the Americans have not yet learned — an appreciation of thought.

One quality essential for science which some physicists lack — humility.

My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God.

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Truth Seekers' FORUM

CURTIS H. LYDIC, Editor

UNITED WE STAND . . .

Professor Axter suggested that our Great Religions of the World class make an intensive study of the major religious groups in our city (Everytown, Tennessee). He divided the class into teams of two and then allowed each team to take its turn at drawing names out of a cigar box.

Lacka Unity, my teammate, put her hand into the box and brought out a small scrap of paper. As she unfolded the paper, a smile flashed across her face and she announced that we had drawn "The Church of Christ" — the church of which she was a member.

After the other students had drawn their names, Professor Axter dismissed the class. Lacka and I walked downstairs to the student center and found an unoccupied booth near the back of the room. We began talking about the procedure which we should use to gather material on our topic.

Lacka eagerly began to enumerate the various sources which she could provide for our study. She said that she had a book entitled, "Why I Am A Member Of The Church of Christ," which put forth many of their beliefs. In addition, she said that she could easily obtain, from her preacher, several booklets written by prominent Church of Christ preachers on the theme, "What Is The Church of Christ?" "One thing we really stress," she said, "is the fact that the Bible is the basis of unity and the ground of fellowship." "The Churches of Christ believe," she continued, "that all religious people can be united, if we just accept the Bible as our authority."

Since I had heard very little about the Church of Christ, I thought that it would probably be a good idea to attend one of their services. Besides, their plea for unity had an Apostolic "ring" to it. I asked Lacka where the Church of Christ met for worship. She bowed her head, trying to hide the crimson color which my question had provoked. Glancing up at me, she said, "Which Church of Christ do you mean? There are seven Churches of Christ in Everytown."—Stan Paregien, Box 843, David Lipscomb College, Nashville, Tenn.

ABOUT SOME WHO DIED FOR OTHERS

"The man who loves his brother lives and moves in the light, and has no reason to stumble" (1 John 2:10). True love is a condition of discipleship. And the greatest proof of true love is the willingness to die for the welfare of others. "We know and to some extent realize the love of God for us because Christ expressed it in laying down his life for us. We must in turn express our love by laying down our lives for those who are our brothers." (1 John 3:16)

According to reports, several Christian missionaries recently died in the

Congo because they chose to stay and try to help people who needed their help rather than leave to protect their own lives. The only way I can understand this action is to say that they were committed to the life and love of Jesus. In the action of these people, I see something of what the life of Jesus was really like — service and love for God and man. This is the only explanation I can offer for what they did.

Some reflection on these events ought to cause us to think seriously about the position which demands that we refuse to consider such people Christians. They appear to have given a tremendous manifestation of that love which is a proof of discipleship.

But, I can already hear the conditioned response of our orthodoxy, "proving" that those who died didn't really possess true love, and therefore cannot be considered by "loyal Christians" as being disciples of Jesus.

How does this response go? Something like this: "Paul said that even if we give our bodies to be burned, and don't have love, it profits nothing (1 Cor. 13:3). Further, he says that 'love rejoices in the truth' (vs. 7). And it's evident these people didn't have the truth since they didn't wear the 'right name for the church' or engage in 'the right acts of worship'. Therefore, since they didn't 'rejoice in the truth', their actions didn't spring from love and so were profitless. So, we can't consider them Christians."

The abuse of Paul's writings inherent in the response outlined above is so clear as not to need any elaboration.

The actions of these people who gave their lives ought to make us stop and ask the question as to whether or not we may have missed the point of the religion of Jesus when we make a man's standing before God depend on the right pronouncement of our shibboleths with respect to many "issues" and give no place to the matter of love for God and man as seen in their willingness to lay down their lives for others. How many of us who can "wax valiant" in our assaults on others because they do not understand everything as we do, or who can be so bold in our defense of what we are pleased to call "sound doctrine" would show ourselves willing to be valiant and bold to the point of giving up our lives to try to serve others?

Is everything right with our conception of Christianity when it demands that we must refuse to consider those who showed the love of Jesus in its greatest measure as brothers beloved in the faith?

Is there not something wrong with our sense of spiritual values when that sense leads us to deny that such people as these are disciples of the Lamb and when it causes us to make Christianity dependent on one's observance of outward forms alone, many of which, in the final analysis, may be only our opinions? — Obert Henderson, 3117 Sheridan, Loveland, Coloralo 80537

WHO AM I?

"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith . . . " (1 Timothy 1:4, KJV).

"But avoil foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain." (Titus 3:9, KJV).

About a year ago, while visiting in a home, a high school senior asked a question that I have thought much about in the past months.

He prefaced his question in this way: He and some of his friends, who were members of the "Christian church", had been discussing "church." They insisted that the group called "the church of Christ" had branched off from "the Christian church." But he had always been told that the Christian church had branched off from "us." His question was: 'What should I have told them? What could I have told them?"

Truthfully, that had always been a question in my mind, and had never been easy (for me) to answer, considering my indoctrinated background.

But one of these two verses of Scripture came to my mind with a flash of insight!

In essence, this young man's question was one of those I had asked myself: What is my genealogy? What is my pedigree? What is my lineage? What is my religious ancestry?

I believe the reply I gave him was closer to the truth than I had been at any other time in my life when trying to answer this question for myself.

Mentioning this reference of Paul's to genealogical concern, I told him I did not know (the answer to his question), but I was sure of one thing: the teachings of Jesus will still make one godly and Christ-like, if obeyed from the heart, without introducing any problem whatsoever of church genealogy.

I seriously doubt that when Jesus the Christ uttered, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (literally, *assembly,* with no high falutin' organizational implications), He intended to start the beginning of a long genealogical history of churchism. I have therefore lost interest in tracing all the way back to A. D. 33, in Jerusalem, for my church ancestry. I have lost interest in tracing it out of the Reformation and the Restoration as well.

A recent editorial in the *Firm Foundation* devoted an entire page to talk about church, church, church, but unless I overlooked one or more, the Lord Jesus Christ was not mentioned at all, unless the use of the word "Christians" (used one time) counts.

This interest in and concern over churchanity to the neglect of genuine Christianity fulfills the very prediction of Paul. It *has* ministered questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith, and our failure to avoid genealogies *has* been most unprofitable and vain.

THE WAY is still revealed in Christ, by Christ, through Christ; and the Scriptures reveal Christ, not church. Christ's people collectively are an assembly, but this assembly is not the object of our loyalty — our loyalty is to Christ.

While we may use *human* logic and syllogistical reason, using a few here-and-there verses, that "church" and "Christ" are equal to each other, a thorough reading of the New Testament book-by-book fails to sustain such reasoning, if my understanding is correct. — Jim Smith, 1321 W. Drew, Ft. Worth, Texas.

BOOK NOTES

Raccoon John Smith by Louis Cochran. This novel based on the life of the famous pioneer Kentucky preacher is important reading for all adherents